

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR.”

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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CHAPTER XVII. THE SAM PRINGLES AT HOME.

SOME weeks later than the breaking up at Miss Cooke's academy, we find ourselves at a white-washed house, close to the entrance to a country town.

This residence had a meagre lawn in front, and a hutch beside the gate which bore the honourable title of “lodge;” “Spring View” was on the pillars of the gate; and it was the abode of the Samuel, or Sam, Pringle family—of the young Mr. Pringle who had figured at the garden-gate in the adventures just detailed. They were of that class of country folk who, not important enough to be country squires, were always striving and struggling to maintain themselves among the genteel. This aim, it must be admitted, was chiefly pursued by Mrs. Pringle, whose restless life was consumed in such efforts, Mr. Sam Pringle taking it easy, much as he took the world. They drew their subsistence from his being agent to various gentlemen, an occupation which was a perpetual thorn in the lady's side; one of the labours of her life being to varnish over the character of this hideous calling, either by discovering of precedent—as where noblemen's nephews had actually held the office—or by trying to persuade herself that it was in itself a calling as honourable, and as much pursued, as that of the Bar or the Church. The family consisted of three—the son Pringle and two rather diminutive girls, who seemed to be driven about by their mamma like a pair of Shetland ponies. They had such single-

ness of purpose in the Great Cause—viz., of settling and of getting established in life by means of the ordinary but difficult-to-be-acquired article, a husband—that they would say or do anything to secure that end. But the district they worked seemed likely to be as unprofitable as an American mine.

With none of these pains, however, was Sam Pringle troubled. He was a man close on sixty, and had spent nearly all those sixty years in buffooning at life. In his youth he had always been what is called a joker, and as he grew old he gradually developed into a kind of social clown. His round face was always in a grin, and at all times and seasons he would indulge in his “sells.” All this was to the despair of his family, who might cloak the agency, but, alas! could not disguise this irrepressible joker and his “vulgar” jests. Any attempts at repression they soon found only recoiled upon their heads, as he had all the malice of a monkey, and would, on such occasions, explode some startling piece of vulgarity, or, worse still, make some awkward revelation of household economy. “Old Sam,” as he was always called, more in allusion to his clowning than to his age, was, in short, a dreadful trial to his family; and they, perhaps not unreasonably, imputed the up-hill struggle they had to maintain, and the failure in “placing the girls,” to this sore impediment.

We now find Mrs. Pringle seated, with her daughters, one afternoon just before dinner, by an unpretending fire, for they were forced to be economical. The three were working, and talking over the head of the house.

“You know it comes to this—what

gentleman would marry into this family, when he sees he must have such father-in-law? He's ruining us; that's what it's all coming to. If he could be got to restrain his low manners; but that's hopeless."

The sound of wheels were heard outside, signifying the return of a rather rusty-headed one-horse phaeton, in which Mr. Pringle drove about the country on business. There was a brougham of corresponding "shakiness" in the coach-house, for the use of the ladies. An ancient grey did for both. Now enters Sam Pringle, making grotesque bows, and affecting to be reverential.

"Oh, my lady, will you let in a poor vulgar fellow like me?"

He was fond of thus addressing his wife, in allusion to her taste for good society.

"Now, please, no nonsense, Mr. Pringle. Did you bring me the things I asked you to get, from Hubbard's?"

"Oh, of course!" said he. "It's not for the like of a plebeian like me to forget. Well, pony number one, what's the best news with you?"

The girls were too accustomed to the clowning to answer. But their unabashed parent went on:

"If you knew the news I have got, you'd all be at my feet. What d'ye say to my Lord Garterley's compliments—hopes to have the pleasure—and all that?"

Six matches seemed to have flashed in the eyes of the three ladies.

"What! he asked us?" they all said together. "Where's the letter? Where did you meet him?" added Mrs. Pringle eagerly.

"Well, if the truth must be told—I was just—saving your presence, my lady—coming out—"

"Oh, I know," said the lady, despairingly; "you needn't tell me. Something low, of course—"

"Coming out of The Bull, after as good a glass of ale as I have had for a long time. Ah! sold again, my lady."

"For goodness' sake stop this buffoonery, and give Lord Garterley's message."

Having had his joke, this malicious elderly gentleman now proceeded to communicate his news.

"Great doings, girls, and my lady. Garterley's coming out: great party; fiery cross sent out; highest of the high jinks. Wonderful times! You're asked, my lady, and the two ponies, and the poor fellow that cleans the boots. It was very nice of them asking me, I think."

"Who are to be there? What day is it for?" said the lady calmly, and knowing that the only way to obtain information was to be patient. On which Sam Pringle produced the invitation, and the delighted ladies found that they really were duly and formally bidden to attend at Garterley, the seat of Lord Garterley, and remain for one week to enjoy the festivities there provided. The delight and the ecstasy of ascertaining that this joyful news was indeed true, and that what the three had sighed and pined for—and, what was more, had toiled and straggled for, for months and years—was at last secured, made the sensation of that moment truly exquisite. As in the case of Mrs. Shandy's maid, and the reversion of the green gown, the three minds darted away simultaneously in the direction of certain wardrobes and receptacles, where were laid up in ordinary various millinery crafts that had seen rough weather enough in ball-rooms. These the skilful workwomen saw already refitted and shaped, altered and made ready for sea; new sails, and laces, and rigging would do wonders!

"Alfred is asked too," said his mother. "But the foolish idle fellow will be pottering about after some shop-girl. He is ridiculous."

"I'll write to him to-morrow, ma."

"Puppy," said Mr. Pringle, dropping the clown manner and assuming a savage deportment; "regular puppy! How dare he go on as he does. Wasting my money, hanging about boarding-schools. Look at the bill I had to pay for him at that Red Lion. Such a scrape to get into!"

"And then the expense of my going to London to save him from losing his place! Heaven help us!"

"Oh yes, my lady; your hautystocratic influence saved him, of course."

"I am always in terror," continued the lady, addressing herself to her daughters, "of hearing of some low match, of his having married a refreshment girl, or something of the kind."

"Then I can tell you he wouldn't show such bad taste, after all; some of the said girls are uncommonly—"

"He has no steadiness—can't fix on anything," she went on, taking no notice. "You know even in that affair at the school—to pick out one of the dependents of the place!"

"That's what I said," said her husband, now serious. "Why, he had a grand opportunity, a grand one. There are

girls in those places with fifty and a hundred thousand a piece; and, once over into the garden, and his arms round——”

“Hush! hush, Mr. Pringle. Your daughters are present. I beg, really——”

Thus reprimanded, Mr. Pringle abruptly changed his tone.

“I was thinking, my lovely peeress,” he said, “we must send for that fellow at once, and let him fly at any game that’s going. They’ve always a bevy of endowed and established young women.”

“I was thinking so too,” said his lady, in a business-like way. “It will cost money; but we must do something, if we don’t want to be in the poor-house. Even high connection, without money, would do; it gives a back——”

“Yes; for a jump at le’p-frog.”

“Leap! leap! Mr. Pringle. Do be cautious. These are the things that ruin the girls. If you’d only keep quiet and let us work——” What young man, with real bona fide intentions, that heard you speak in that way; why, they’d——”

“Oh, papa, indeed you are dreadful sometimes,” observed the ponies.

Sam Pringle became vicious.

“So you want to lay it on me, my lady. I can tell you what a young fellow don’t like; and that is to be gobbled up by three mouths, all quacking after him like geese on a common. Get along! I’m not going to be taken about like an idiot, with a padlock on my jaw, as if you were ashamed of me.”

Thus warned, the ladies sighed and remained silent, with a resigned air. Scenes of this pattern were of ordinary occurrence; neither party lost temper, all being well accustomed to it. They were most frequent, however, on the eve of opening a campaign, such as was now at hand.

Having achieved this success, Mr. Pringle gave his family a little bit of news that would please them.

“I heard of old Joliffe to-day, from a fellow that met him at dinner. Never was in better health or spirits, and absolutely doting on those Allens.”

“That’s no news,” said the lady with a sigh. “There’s that foolish Alfred, again. Had he gone and stopped only a month every year, as the old man wished, he’d have kept him from being the victim of those people. Now, there’s no chance.”

“The puppy! the stuck-up puppy! It bored him, forsooth. It will bore him more, when he has to go begging and

borrowing five shillings to get his dinner; or when his tailor and bootmaker want to be paid. He must pay his debts somehow—for I shan’t, because I can’t—or go to jail, or run out of the country.”

“The only thing is to get him a wife, and at once.”

In these agreeable speculations the evening closed. We now see what the Sam Pringles were like.

CHAPTER XVIII. GARTERLEY.

GARTERLEY was a very grand house, stately and spreading, like the old trees about it, and inspiring tourist visitors with a certain awe. One day in the week was set apart for these, when they were haughtily required by a grim old housekeeper to wipe their shoes, and not “to touch the family’s things;” and were not even allowed to have their fill of staring, being hurried on in a herd, as is not unfrequently the custom in such great houses.

Lord Garterley was an elderly bachelor, with a white head, a pleasant eye, and an open mouth—kept open a little too much for a reputation of good sense which he undoubtedly enjoyed. He was very wealthy, enjoyed life and society; had an artistic turn; and, above all, encouraged everything that would amuse him. Thus, some of his good-natured friends insisted that, if he met “a clever Punch-and-Judy man,” he would be certain to ask him to stay at Garterley. Above all, he liked to be surrounded by agreeable ladies, one or two of whom were generally installed as favourites, though his lordship was fickle enough. This was all harmless and Platonic, and amusing to lookers-on.

Such a personage was naturally much sought; and agreeable, but perhaps scheming, people often strove to obtain supreme direction, and establish themselves on a more permanent footing. This manœuvre had always failed, until, at some dinner or ball, his lordship had fallen in with some “charming people”—“the Charles Webbers,” Mr. and Mrs., the lady half of which influence had a strange, half-Jewish, half-Spanish look, which quite captivated him. They must, of course, come down to Garterley, and at once. Mr. Webber was “something in a bank,” and his lady could not be traced very clearly in any of the books, red or blue; yet, at the end of a fortnight, when his lordship had found he had been mistaken as to the Jewish or Spanish “look,” and that Mrs.

Charles Webber was a more than ordinarily insipid person, the Charles Webbers did not go away. Mr. Webber had given some mornings to the accounts, and had found out that the steward was plundering ; he had interposed between the dreary bishop, who always sent Lord Garterley to sleep before dessert, and had taken the episcopal weight on himself, and without offending the prelate. He had done other "odd jobs ;" and Mrs. Charles Webber, though in her original claim discovered to be an impostor, had made herself useful with prosy ladies. In short, the Charles Webbers actually got the vacant place, and Lord Garterley took them. They did everything, arranged everything ; and now, after ten years' service, had become indispensable. They certainly lived six months of each year at Garterley.

On the occasion of the present festivities, the Charles Webbers had arranged everything, and asked everybody, that was desirable. The Sam Pringles ; Pratt-Hawkins ; Mrs. MacIvor, the young wife of a struggling doctor, whom Lord Garterley had heard sing ; the droll and "side-splitting" Shakerley ; the young law student, with a heavenly voice ; the handsome, dashing Mrs. Trotter, and her more handsome but less dashing daughters ; old Phipps, the grey and rather wizened epicure, so slim and spare about the back, so grey and wiry about the hair and whiskers, and given to good stories, and a certain amount of wit, which was like some of the old port, rather thin and colourless from keeping too long. There was also Madame Grazielli, the famous lyric singer of the operas, who had sung twenty years ago, and turned the heads of all the fashionable "bucks" of the time. In addition, there was Sturges, the wealthy young man from the City, whose father had bought an estate, and kept hounds, not far from Garterley ; with a few "pawns," as they might be termed, who, at their visits at great houses, come on like the supers of a stage army, no one troubling themselves about their names or behaviour, save that the stage-manager sees that they make a satisfactory show in return for their engagement.

On the day that the festivities opened, Garterley, from being a stately and deserted mansion, all swathed and hooded in muslin and holland, now revealed itself in all its splendour. There was great state ; the grand drawing-room—that with the silver chairs, ordered for the Prince Regent

—had been thrown open ; the twenty servants or so in their state liveries resplendent in gold, like the band on a levee-day, were posturing about with trays—embarrassing some of the guests not a little ; not the least the young Doctor MacIvor and his wife, who were cowed and wretched, and looked out uneasily from an ambuscade near the curtains.

"Who," said Pratt-Hawkins, a full, portly man, with a decided yet mild manner, "who are those MacIvors ?"

"A doctor," said the young Shakerley. "Picked 'em up at the last fair, outside Richardson's show ; secured 'em reasonable."

Pratt-Hawkins was a little shocked. "Dear me," he said, "pity he is so indiscriminate. You see it's cruelty to these poor things to bring them in here. They're suffering torture at this moment. This sort of people never will amalgamate."

Yet it was wonderful how Pratt-Hawkins refuted his own theory, and had himself amalgamated ; it being known to many that he was the son of a most respectable grocer in a country town. The more credit to him, the good-natured people said who repeated the story, to have raised himself. Perhaps this was the reason that Pratt-Hawkins held the lower ranks in horror, and worshipped idols in the shape of dukes and barons and peeresses, to whom he was a sort of "handy man," invaluable in every way. If people had asked to what profession Pratt-Hawkins belonged, it might have been answered fairly that this of following the Peerage, like following the Bar, was the one. At this he really toiled, sat up of nights, and almost injured his health, until he, as it were, got into "great business," and at the head of his profession. Pratt-Hawkins was not pleased with the complexion of the present party ; it was not "leavened," as he complained, and though there was young Fazakerley, son of the peer of that name, and a few more of the same kind, still it was like a circuit town, to which he had been brought down on pretence of business, and where there was none.

Now came Charles Webber, spurring up like an aide-de-camp to the disturbed and scared MacIvors. "Now, if you please," he said, with a sort of dictatorial air, "Lord Garterley would wish you to favour the company." And the unhappy creatures, who had been studying photographic albums, were led off to perform their favourite song. This was of a very

unpretending, and, it must be said, unmeritorious kind. His lordship had heard them at a school-feast, or school-treat, when the young doctor and his wife had come forward, for the amusement of the children, to sing a sort of musical quarrel and reconciliation, in alternate verses, and which was entitled "Jockie and Jeannie." This they did with some spirit under the circumstances, and the eager lord was so delighted that at the close he introduced himself, and insisted on their coming at once to Garterley. Alas! it now sounded very different; they wanted the freedom which the presence of the children gave. Here the simple wranglings of Jockie and Jeannie sounded flat. The performers were overawed by the company, who really did not follow the humour of the thing, such as it was. And though the young doctor did his best, with desperation almost, still his lady—a good-humoured unsophisticated country person, in a rich blue silk purchased for the occasion, and a cameo brooch—divided between the piano and the cold, amused looks of the guests, made no success. A cloud came over the face of the host, who had gone round announcing what a remarkable display of native humour and poignancy they were about to witness, and who had remained leaning on his elbows at the end of the piano, and staring into their faces. At the end he said in a loud voice, "You didn't sing that in the way I first heard you; it's not the same thing." Much abashed and sinking under the reproof, the unhappy pair found their way back to their corner, discredited, and feeling like impostors. His lordship, indeed, thought as much, and was petulant—with himself chiefly.

"What is over them, Webber? Why do they keep in that corner?"

Webber at once galloped across the field; brought them out; put Mrs. Mac-Ivor beside the parson, and conversed a few moments with the doctor. Something must be done to redeem the mistake, and keep his lordship in good humour. Here was the young law-student, a natural young fellow enough, who at once volunteered; and gave out, certainly in a charming tenor, the old ballad of "She wore a wreath of roses," which touched everybody present. Even the Grazielli, a stately, full-blown personage, quite at her ease, signified her approbation.

This was the sort of thing that usually went on at Garterley, and was to go on for some ten days, which made the time

very difficult to get through. Indeed, but for the sense of duty towards daughters, and the chance of its offering opportunities which no conscientious matron would feel justified in putting aside, the place would have been held but in ill odour. Everyone knew, and was rather tired of, the indiscriminate Lord Garterley, whose poems, written when he was the Hon. Hugh Chevron, had been before the public since the days of the pink-silk annals.

The adroit Charles Webbers knew perfectly well that a sort of variety must be imported; and, by way of "refresher," had distributed the guests so that they should arrive in succession. Accordingly, it was not till a couple of days later that the ancient vehicles of the Pringle family drove up, containing five persons—the mother and father, the two ponies, and our hero of the garden-gate, Alfred. This irruption, which took place a short time before dinner, made a considerable diversion, as Sam Pringle was considered to be "such a prime old card." He was, indeed, in such good spirits, that, as they drove up the avenue, Mrs. Pringle turned to him, and said, "Now I conjure you, Mr. Pringle, do show some respect for yourself and your family, and don't make us ridiculous"—an appeal he was in much too good a humour to resent, and to which his only answer was a most significant wink. These were holidays for him; he liked good wines and rich fare. His son Alfred, whd had a contempt for the paternal antics that was not to be expressed, was reserved and moody. He was still thinking of the apparition at the garden-gate, and of that most romantic adventure. He felt he was thrown away in the world generally, and not in the mood for festivity. They had hardly made their entry into the drawing-room, at the general assembly before going into dinner, when the incorrigible Sam Pringle began. The host, who was amused by him, received him with alacrity.

"Ha! Pringle, how de do? Brought all your jokes I hope—old ones as well as some new—oh?"

"Well, indeed, my lord, I have had 'em done up, and altered, and re-lined, like my lady and her girls; who have been hard at work, cutting up, and ironing, and clear-starching for the last week, all in honour of this most illustrious event."

"Ha, ha! very good," said his lordship. Then came the state banquet, when Sam grew more and more exuberant, talking

with half-a-dozen people at a time, while loud laughter, each burst of which made Mrs. Pringle wince, saluted his sallies. What delighted them was his mode of dealing with Pratt-Hawkins, his *vis-à-vis*, who had been talking of a "dear duchess" in a plaintive way.

"She sent for me. Of course I went at once. When I arrived, I simply said, 'Now, duchess, you must let me speak to you as an old friend. This won't do—you must make an exertion; and she did."

"Phew!" said Sam Pringle, with a twinkle and a grin; "think of that now. Being able to say all that to a duchess! And how did she take it now, if it wouldn't be impertinent to ask? She made the exertion?"

"Yes; nerv'd herself and got through! I have some little influence with her."

"Only think of that," said Sam, looking round. "Why, I and my lady here would just do anything to get within call of a real Grace."

"My lady!" said Pratt-Hawkins, looking up the table, nervous lest he should have overlooked some person of high degree. "Who do you mean?"

"A little pet name for my missing rib, who has the same feelings to the aristocracy that you have, sir. She adores 'em all."

"Now, really, Mr. Pringle, I implore you, do not make yourself ridiculous."

But Sam, who was drinking champagne, and being "drawn out" on the right and left, had reached the irrepressible stage. It was agreed again and again that he was certainly "a great card."

After dinner the drawing-room scenes of the nights previous were repeated; the servants promenading, and the MacIvors at the album (how they longed to be at home again!). One of the dashing Miss Trotters had taken Mr. Pringle, Jun., in hand, while her sister was engrossed with the young Fazakerley. The host was eagerly darting about the room, wishing someone to "do something"—for he assumed that no one had any business to cumber the earth, without qualification to exhibit in some way. It was on this night that his "Diva," as she was called, volunteered—"so nice of her," everybody says—to give one of her old "bravura" triumphs, such as she used to intoxicate the audiences with, in the old opera days. This she did with great lyric power; and at the conclusion the host advanced in a transport, and kissed her. Everyone thought

this so natural and appropriate, and it was saluted by a round of applause, led by the Charles Webbers, who were hurrying about afterwards, artfully impressing it on the company. "You saw the compliment his lordship paid the Diva? She was quite flattered by it; she says she values it more than the ring the Czar gave her."

It was, however, a little after the great lady had concluded her performance that two new arrivals had entered the room. The ear of the wary Charles Webber had, indeed, caught the sound of wheels about half an hour before, and "Harris," a servant who was always in his confidence, had come to whisper him; to whom Mr. Webber said: "Very well, Harris; you know the rooms." The doors, as we said, opened; and the host, who had been hovering round the Diva, talking Italian volubly to her, suddenly interrupted himself and sprang towards the new-comers.

"My dear Mrs. Dawson, how do you do? And Miss Phœbe!"

THE DRAMA UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

FOR such a triumph as fanaticism enjoyed over the fine arts in England, during and for some time after the great civil war, no parallel can be found in the history of any other nation. And it was not, be it remembered, the work of a capricious and cruel despot: it was the tyranny of a solemn legislative assembly. Hypocrisy had some share in the proceeding, very likely; but in the main the Puritanism of the time was sincere even to its frenzies of intolerance. Good men and true held that they were doing only what was sound, and wise, and right, when they made ruthless war upon poetry, and painting, and all the refinements and graces of life, denouncing them as scandals and sins, ungodly devices, pernicious wiles of the author of all evil; when they peremptorily closed the doors of the theatres, and dismissed actors, authors, managers, and all concerned to absolute starvation.

In the England of that time, no doubt, Puritanism obtained supporters out of respect for superior power; just as in France, at a later date, Republicanism gained converts by means of terror. The prudent, when conflict and tumult are at hand, will usually side with the stronger combatant. Thus it was with little resistance that there passed through both

Houses of Parliament, in 1647, the ordinance by virtue of which the theatres were to be dismantled and suppressed; all actors of plays to be publicly whipped; and all spectators and playgoers, for every offence, condemned to forfeit five shillings. This was the coup de grâce; for the stage had already undergone many and severe assaults. The player's tenure of his art had become more and more precarious, until acting seemed to be as a service of danger. The ordinance of 1647 closed the theatres for nearly fourteen years; but, for some sixteen years before, the stage had been in a more or less depressed condition. Scarcely any new dramatists of distinction had appeared after 1630. The theatres were considerably reduced in number by the time 1636 was arrived at. Then came arbitrary closing of the playhouses—professedly but for a season. Thus in 1636 they were closed for ten months; in 1642 for eighteen months. In truth, Puritanism carried on its victorious campaign against the drama for something like thirty years; while even at an earlier date there had been certain skirmishing attacks upon the stage. With the first Puritan began the quarrel with the players. As Isaac Disraeli has observed, "we must go back to the reign of Elizabeth, to comprehend an event which occurred in that of Charles the First." A sanctimonious sect urged extravagant reforms—at first, perhaps, in all simplicity—founding their opinions upon cramped and literal interpretations of divine precepts, and forming views of human nature "more practicable in a desert than a city, and rather suited to a monastic order than to a polished people." Still, these fanatics could scarcely have dreamed that power would ever be given them to carry their peculiar theories into practice, and to govern a nation as though it were composed entirely of precisians and bigots. For two generations—from the Reformation to the Civil War—the Puritans had been the butt of the satirical, the jest of the wits—ridiculed and laughed at on all sides. Then came a time, "when," in the words of Macaulay, "the laughers began to look grave in their turn. The rigid, ungainly zealots . . . rose up in arms, conquered, ruled, and, grimly smiling, trod down under their feet the whole crowd of mockers."

Yet from the first the Puritans had not neglected the pen as a weapon of offence. In 1579 Stephen Gosson published his curious pamphlet bearing the lengthy title

of "The Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers, Jesters, and such like Catterpillars of a Commonwealth; setting up the Flag of Defiance to their mischievous exercise, and over-throwing their Bulwarks, by Profane Writers, natural reason, and common experience: A Discourse as pleasant for gentlemen that favour learning as profitable for all that will follow virtue." Gosson expresses himself with much quaint force, but he is not absolutely intolerant. He was a student of Oxford University, had in his youth written poems and plays, and even appeared upon the scene as an actor. Although he had repented of these follies, he still viewed them without acrimony. To his pamphlet we are indebted for certain interesting details, in regard to the manners and customs of the Elizabethan playgoers. A further attack upon the theatre was led by Dr. Reynolds, of Queen's College, who was greatly troubled by the performance of a play at Christchurch, and who published, in 1593, *The Overthrow of Stage Plays*, described by Disraeli as "a tedious invective, foaming at the mouth of its text with quotations and authorities." Reynolds was especially severe upon "the sin of boys wearing the dress and affecting the airs of women;" and thus unconsciously helped on a change he would have regarded as still more deplorable—the appearance of actresses upon the stage. But a fiercer far than Reynolds was to arise. In 1633 Prynne produced his *Histro-Mastix*; or, *The Player's Scourge*, a monstrous work of more than a thousand closely-printed quarto pages, devoted to the most searching indictment of the stage and its votaries. The author has been described as a man of great learning, but little judgment; of sour and austere principles, but wholly deficient in candour. His book was judged libellous, for he had unwittingly aspersed the Queen in his attack upon the masques performed at Court. He was cited in the Star Chamber, and sentenced to stand in the pillory, to lose both ears, to pay a heavy fine, and to undergo imprisonment for life. This severe punishment probably stimulated the Puritans, when opportunity came to them, to deal mercilessly with the actors, by way of avenging Prynne's wrongs, or of expressing sympathy with his sufferings.

And it is to be noted that early legislation in regard to the players had been far from lenient. For such actors as had obtained the countenance of "any Baron

of this Realme," or "any other honourable personage of greater degree," exception was to be made; otherwise, all common players in interludes, all fencers, bearwards, and minstrels were declared by an Act passed in the fourteenth year of Elizabeth to be rogues and vagabonds, and, whether male or female, liable on a first conviction "to be grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with an hot iron of the compass of an inch about, manifesting his or her roguish kind of life." A second offence was adjudged to be felony; a third entailed death without benefit of clergy, or privilege of sanctuary. Meanwhile, the regular companies of players, to whom this harsh Act did not apply, were not left unmolested. The Court might encourage them, but the City would have none of them. They had long been accustomed to perform in the yards of the City inns, but an order of the Common Council, dated December, 1575, expelled the players from the City. Thereupon public playhouses were erected outside the "liberties" or boundaries of the City. The first was probably the theatre in Shoreditch; the second, opened in its immediate neighbourhood, was known as the Curtain; the third, built by John Burbadge and other of the Earl of Leicester's company of players, was the famous Blackfriars Theatre. These were all erected about 1576, and other playhouses were opened soon afterwards. Probably to avoid the penalties of the Act of Elizabeth, all strolling and unattached players made haste to join regular companies, or to shelter themselves under noble patronage. And now the Church raised its voice, and a controversy which still possesses some vitality touching the morality or immorality of playhouses, plays, and players, was fairly and formally entered upon. A sermon preached at Paul's Cross, November, 1577, "in the time of the plague," by the Rev. T. Wilcocks, denounced in strong language the "common plays" in London, and the multitude that flocked to them and followed them, and described "the sumptuous theatre houses" as a continual monument of London's prodigality and folly. Performances, it seems, had for a while been forbidden because of the plague. "I like the policy well if it hold still," said the preacher; "for a disease is but bogged and patched up that is not cured in the cause, and the cause of plagues is sin, if you look to it well; and the cause of sin are playes; therefore, the

cause of plagues are playes." It is clear, too, that the clergy had become affected by a certain jealousy of the players, the sound of whose trumpet attracted more attention than the ringing of the church-bells, and brought together a larger audience. John Stockwood, schoolmaster of Tunbridge, who preached at Paul's Cross on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1578, demanded, "Will not a filthy play, with the blast of a trumpet, sooner call thither a thousand, than an hour's tolling bring to the sermon a hundred?" It was, moreover, an especial grievance to the devout at this period that plays were represented on a Sunday, the church and the theatre being thus brought into positive rivalry and antagonism. The clergy saw with dismay that their congregations were thin and listless, while crowded and excited audiences rewarded the exertions of the players. Mr. Stockwood, declining to discuss whether plays were or not wholly unlawful, yet protested with good reason that in a Christian commonwealth they were intolerable on the seventh day, and exclaimed against the "horrible profanity" and "devilish inventions" of the lords of misrule, morrice and May-day dancers, whom he accused of tripping about the church, even during the hours of service, and of figuring in costumes, which, by their texture and scantiness, outraged ordinary notions of decency.

But notwithstanding this old-established opposition to the theatres on the part of both Churchmen and Puritans, and the severe oppression of the players by the authorities, it is yet indisputable that the English were essentially a playgoing people; proud, as well they might be, of the fact that they possessed the finest drama and the best actors in the world. And, allowing for the licence and grossness which the times permitted, if they did not encourage it, and a certain liberty of speech and action allowed time out of mind to the clowns of the stage, the drama suppressed by the Puritans was of sound and wholesome constitution, rich in poetry of the noblest class. It is sufficient to say, indeed, that it was the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. To a very large class, therefore, the persecution of the players, and the suppression of the stage, must have been grave misfortune and real privation. To many the theatre still supplied, not merely recreation, but education and enlightenment as well. But that there was any rising of the public

on behalf of the players does not appear. Puritanism was too strong for opposition. The public had to submit, as best it could, to the tyranny of fanaticism. But that bitter mortification was felt by very many may be taken for granted.

The authors were deprived of occupation so far as concerned the stage; they sought other employment for their pens; printing a play, however, now and then, by way of keeping their hands in as dramatists. The managers, left with nothing to manage, perhaps turned to trade in quest of outlet for their energies—the manager has been always something of the trader. But for the actors, forbidden to act, what were they to do? They had been constituted Malignants, or Royalists, almost by Act of Parliament. The younger players promptly joined the army of King Charles. Mohun acquired the rank of captain, and, at the close of the war, served in Flanders, receiving the pay of a major. Hart became a lieutenant of horse, under Sir Thomas Dallison, in the regiment of Prince Rupert. In the same troop served Burt as cornet, and Shatterel as quartermaster. Allen, of the Cockpit, was a major and quartermaster-general at Oxford. Robinson, serving on the side of the king, was long reputed to have lost his life at the taking of Basing House. The story went that the Cromwellian General Harrison had, with his own hands, slain the actor, crying, as he struck him down, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." Chalmers maintains, however, that an entry in the parish register of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, of the death and burial of "Richard Robinson, a player," in March, 1647, negatives this account of the actor's fate. Possibly there were two actors bearing the not uncommon name of Robinson. These were all players of note, who had acquitted themselves with applause in the best plays of the time. Of certain older actors unable to bear arms for the king, Lowin turned innkeeper, and died, at an advanced age, landlord of the Three Pigeons at Brentford. He had been an actor of eminence in the reign of James the First; "and his poverty was as great as his age," says one account of him. Taylor, who was reputed to have been taught by Shakespeare himself the correct method of interpreting the part of Hamlet, died and was buried at Richmond. These two actors, as did others probably,

sought to pick up a little money by publishing copies of plays that had obtained favour in performance, but had not before been printed. Thus, in 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wild Goose Chase* was printed in folio, "for the public use of all the ingenious, and the private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, servants to his late Majesty, and by them dedicated to the honoured few lovers of dramatic poesy: wherein they modestly intimate their wants, and that with sufficient cause, for whatever they were before the wars, they were afterwards reduced to a necessitous condition." Pollard, possessed of some means, withdrew to his relatives in the country, and there ended his days peacefully. Perkins and Sumner lodged humbly together in Clerkenwell, and were interred in that parish. None of these unfortunate old actors lived to see the re-opening of the theatres, or the restoration of the monarchy.

But one actor is known to have sided with the Parliament and against the king. He renounced the stage, and took up the trade of a jeweller in Aldermanbury. This was Swanston, who had played Othello, and been described as "a brave, roaring fellow, who would make the house shake again." "One wretched actor," Mr. Gifford writes in the introduction to his edition of *Mas-singer*, "only deserted his sovereign." But it may be questioned whether Swanston really merited this reprobation. He was a Presbyterian, it seems, and remained true to his political opinions, even though these now involved the abandonment of his profession. If his brother players fought for the king, they fought no less for themselves, and for the theatre the Puritans had suppressed. Nor is the contrast Mr. Gifford draws, between the conduct of our actors at the time of the civil war, and the proceedings of the French players during the first French revolution, altogether fair. As Isaac Disraeli has pointed out, there was no question of suppressing the stage in France—it was rather employed as an instrument in aid of the revolution. The actors may have sympathised sincerely with the royal family in their afflicted state, but it was hardly to be expected that men would abandon, on that account, the profession of their choice, in which they had won real distinction, and which seemed to flourish the more owing to the excited condition

of France. The French revolution, in truth, brought to the stage great increase of national patronage.

The civil war concluded, and the cause of King Charles wholly lost, the actors were at their wits' end to earn bread. Certain of them resolved to defy the law, and to give theatrical performances in spite of the Parliament. Out of the wreck of the companies of the different theatres they made up a tolerable troop, and ventured to present some few plays, with as much caution and privacy as possible, at the Cockpit in Drury-lane. This was in the winter of 1648. Doubtless there were many to whom the stage was dear, who were willing enough to encourage the poor players. Playgoing had now become a vice or a misdemeanour — to be prosecuted in secret, like dram-drinking. The Cockpit representations lasted but a few days. During a performance of Fletcher's tragedy of Rollo, Duke of Normandy, in which such excellent actors as Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, Burt, and Hart were concerned, a party of troopers beset the house, broke in about the middle of the play, and carried off the players, accoutred as they were in their stage dresses, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, after being detained some time, they were plundered of their clothes and dismissed. "Afterwards, in Oliver's time," as an old chronicler of dramatic events has left upon record, "they used to act privately, three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses — in particular Holland House, at Kensington—where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad piece or the like." The widow of the Earl of Holland, who was beheaded in March, 1649, occupied Holland House at this time. She was the grand-daughter of Sir Walter Cope, and a stout-hearted lady, who, doubtless, took pride in encouraging the entertainments her late lord's foes had tried so hard to suppress. Alexander Goffe, "the woman-actor at Blackfriars," acted as "Jackall" on the occasion of these furtive performances. He had made himself known to the persons of quality who patronised plays, and gave them notice of the time when and the place where the next representation would "come off." A stage play, indeed, in those days was much what a prize-fight has been in later times—

absolutely illegal, and yet assured of many persistent supporters. Goffe was probably a slim, innocent-looking youth, who was enabled to baffle the vigilance of the Puritan functionaries, and pass freely and unsuspected between the players and their patrons. At Christmas-time and during the few days devoted to Bartholomew Fair, the actors, by dint of bribing the officer in command of the guard at Whitehall, and securing in such wise his connivance, were enabled to present performances at the Red Bull in St. John-street. Sometimes the Puritan troopers were mean enough to accept the hard-earned money of these poor players, and, nevertheless, to interrupt their performance, carrying them off to be imprisoned and punished for their breach of the law. But their great trouble arose from the frequent seizure of their wardrobe by the covetous soldiers. The clothes worn by the players upon the stage were of superior quality—fine dresses were of especial value in times prior to the introduction of scenery—and the loss was hard to bear. The public, it was feared, would be loath to believe in the merits of an actor who was no better attired than themselves. But at length it became too hazardous, as Kirkman relates in the preface to *The Wits; or, Sport upon Sport*, 1672, "to act anything that required any good cloaths; instead of which painted cloath many times served the turn to represent rich habits." Kirkman's book is a collection of certain "scenes or parts of plays . . . the fittest for the actors to represent at this period, there then being little cost in the cloaths, which often were in great danger to be seized by the soldiers." These "select pieces of drollery, digested into scenes by way of dialogue, together with variety of humours of several nations, fitted for the pleasure and content of all persons, either in court, city, county, or camp," were first printed in 1662, by H. Marsh, and were originally contrived by Robert Cox, a comic genius in his way, who exhibited great ingenuity in evading the ordinances of Parliament, and in carrying on dramatic performances in spite of the Puritans. He presented at the Red Bull what were professedly entertainments of rope-dancing, gymnastic feats, and such coarse, practical fun as may even now be seen in the circus of strolling equestrian companies; but with these he cunningly intermingled select scenes from the comedies of the best English dramatists. From Kirkman's

book, which is now highly prized from its rarity, it appears that the "drollery" entitled *The Bouncing Knight*; or, *The Robbers Robbed*, is, in truth, a famous adventure of Sir John Falstaff's, set forth in close accordance with the original text; while the comedy of *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* is reduced to a brief entertainment called *The Equal Match*. Other popular plays are similarly dealt with. But Cox, it seems, invented not less than he borrowed. Upon the foundation of certain old-established farces, he raised up entertainments something of the nature of the extemporary comedy of Italy: characters being devised or developed expressly with a view to his own performance of them. "All we could divert ourselves with," writes Kirkman, "were these humours and pieces of plays, which, passing under the name of a merry, conceited fellow called Bottom the Weaver, Simpleton the Smith, John Swabber, or some such title, were only allowed us, and that by stealth too . . . and these small things were as profitable and as great get-pennies to the actors, as any of our late famed plays." He relates, moreover, that these performances attracted "a great confluence of auditors," insomuch that the Red Bull, a playhouse of large size, was often so full, that "as many went back for want of room as had entered;" and that meanly as these "drolls" might be thought of in later times, they were acted by the best comedians "then and now in being." Especially he applauds the actor, author, and contriver of the majority of the farces—"the incomparable Robert Cox." Isaac Disraeli gives him credit for preserving alive, as it were by stealth, the suppressed spirit of the drama. That he was a very natural actor, or what would now be called "realistic," may be judged from the story told of his performance of a comic blacksmith, and his securing thereby an invitation to work at the forge of a master-smith, who had been present among the audience. "Although your father speaks so ill of you," said the employer of labour, "if you will come and work with me, I will give you twelve pence a week more than I give any other journeyman." As Kirkman adds: "Thus was he taken for a smith bred, that was, indeed, as much of any trade."

It seems certain that, for some few years prior to the Restoration, there had been far less stringent treatment of the players than in the earlier days of the triumph of

Puritanism. Cromwell, perhaps, rather despised the stage than condemned it seriously on religious grounds; the while he did not object to indulge in buffoonery and horseplay, even in the gallery of Whitehall. Some love of music he has been credited with, and this, perhaps, induced him to tolerate the operatic dramas of Sir William Davenant, which obtained representation during the Commonwealth: such as *The History of Sir Francis Drake*, "represented by instrumental and vocal music, and by art of Perspective in Scenes," and *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*. According to Langbaine, the two plays called *The Siege of Rhodes*, were likewise acted "in stilo recitativo," during the time of the civil wars, and upon the restoration were re-written and enlarged for regular performance at the Duke of York's Theatre, in Lincoln's-inn-fields. It seems to have been held that a play was no longer a play, if its words were sung instead of spoken—or these representations of Davenant's works may have been altogether stealthy, and without the cognisance of the legal authorities of the time. Isaac Disraeli, however, has pointed out that in some verses, published in 1653, and prefixed to the plays of Richard Brome, there is evident a tone of exultation at the passing away of power from the hands of those who had oppressed the actors. The poet, in a moralising vein, alludes to the fate of the players as it was affected by the dissolution of the Long Parliament:

See the strange twirl of times! When such poor things
Outlive the dates of parliaments or kings!
This revolution makes exploded wit
Now see the fall of those that ruined it;
And the condemned stage hath now obtained
To see her executioners arraigned.
There's nothing permanent; those high great men
That rose from dust, to dust may fall again;
And fate so orders things that the same hour
Sees the same man both in contempt and power!

For complete emancipation, however, the stage had to wait some years; until, indeed, it pleased Monk, acting in accordance with the desire of the nation, to march his army to London, and to restore the monarchy. Encamped in Hyde-park, Monk was visited by one Rhodes, a bookseller, who had been formerly occupied as wardrobe-keeper to King Charles the First's company of comedians in Blackfriars, and who now applied to the general for permission to re-open the Cockpit in Drury-lane as a playhouse. Monk, it

seems, held histrionic art in some esteem; at any rate the City companies, when with his council of state he dined in their halls, were wont to entertain him with performances of a theatrical kind, satirical farces, dancing and singing, "many shapes and ghosts, and the like; and all to please His Excellency the Lord General," say the newspapers of the time. Rhodes obtained the boon he sought, and, promptly engaging a troop of actors, re-opened the Cockpit. His chief actor was his apprentice, Thomas Betterton, the son of Charles the First's cook. For some fifty years the great Mr. Betterton held his place upon the stage, and upon his death was interred with something like royal honours in Westminster Abbey.

Of the fate of Rhodes nothing further is recorded. He was the first to give back to Londoners a theatre they might visit legally and safely; and that done, he is heard of no more. Killigrew and Davenant were soon invested with patent rights, and entitled to a monopoly of theatrical management in London; probably they prospered by displacing Rhodes, but so much cannot be positively asserted.

The drama was now out of its difficulties. Yet the influence and effect of these did not soon abate. Upon them followed indeed a sort of after-crop of troubles, seriously injurious to the stage. The Cavaliers engendered a drama that was other than the drama the Puritans had destroyed. The theatre was restored, it is true, but with an altered constitution. It was not only that the old race of poets and dramatists had died out, and that writing for the stage was almost a lost art. Taste had altered. As Evelyn regretfully notes in 1662, after witnessing a performance of Hamlet—to which, perhaps, the audience paid little heed, although the incomparable Betterton appeared in the tragedy—"but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad." Shakespeare and his brother-bards were out of fashion. There was a demand for tragedies of the French school—with rhyming lines and artificial sentiment—for comedies of intrigue and equivoque, after a foreign pattern, in lieu of our old English plays of wit, humour, and character. Plagiarism, translation, and adaptation took up a secure position on the stage. The leading playwrights of the Restoration—Dryden, Shadwell, Durfey, Wycherley—all borrowed freely from the French. Dryden frankly apologised—he

was required to produce so many plays that all could not be of his own inventing. The king encouraged appropriation of foreign works. He drew Sir Samuel Tuke's attention to an admired Spanish comedy, advising its adaptation to the English stage: the result was *The Adventures of Five Hours*, a work very highly esteemed by Mr. Pepys. The introduction of scenery was due in a great measure to French example, although "paintings in perspective" had already been seen in an English theatre. But now scenery was imperatively necessary to a dramatic performance, and a sort of passion arose for mechanical devices and decorative appliances of a novel kind. Dryden was no reformer; in truth, to suit his own purposes, he pandered laboriously to the follies and caprices of his patrons; nevertheless, he was fully sensible of the errors of the time, and often chronicles these in his prologues and epilogues. He writes:

True wit has run its best days long ago,
It ne'er looked up since we were lost in show,
When sense in doggerel rhymes and clouds was lost
And dulness flourished at the actor's cost.
Nor stopped it here; when tragedy was done,
Satire and humour the same fate have run,
And comedy is sunk to trick and pun.

Let them who the rebellion first begun
To wit, restore the monarch if they can;
Our author dares not be the first bold man.

And upon another occasion:

But when all failed to strike the stage quite dumb,
Those wicked engines, called machines, are come.
Thunder and lightning now for wit are played,
And shortly scenes in Lapland will be laid.

Fletcher's despised, your Jonson out of fashion,
And wit the only drug in all the nation.

Actresses, too, were introduced upon the stage, in pursuance of continental example. But for these there was really great necessity. The boys who, prior to the civil war, had personated the heroines of the drama, were now too mature both in years and aspect for such an occupation. Doubting we should never play agen,
We have played all our women into men!

says the prologue, introducing the first actress. Hart and Mohun, Clun, Shatterel and Burt, who were now leading actors, had been boy-actresses before the closing of the theatres. And even after the Restoration, Mohun, whose military title of major was always awarded him in the playbills, still appeared as Bellamante, one of the heroines of Shirley's tragedy of *Love's Cruelty*. But this must have been rather too absurd. At the time of the Restoration,

Mohun could hardly have been less than thirty-five years of age. It is to be noted, however, that Kynaston, a very distinguished boy-actress, who, with Betterton, was a pupil of Rhodes, arose after the Restoration. Of the earlier boy-actresses, their methods and artifices of performance, Kynaston could have known nothing. He was undoubtedly a great artist, winning extraordinary favour both in male and female characters, the last and perhaps the best of all the epicene performers of the theatre of the past.

But if the stage, after the Restoration, differed greatly from what it had been previously, it yet prospered and gained strength more and more. It was most fortunate in its actors and actresses, who lent it invaluable support. It never attained again the poetic heights to which it had once soared; but it surrendered gradually much of its grossness and its baser qualities, in deference to the improving tastes of its patrons, and in alarm at the sound strictures of men like Jeremy Collier. The plagiarist, the adapter, and the translator did not relax their hold upon it; but eventually it obtained the aid of numerous dramatists of enduring distinction. The fact that it again underwent decline is traceable to various causes—among them, the monopoly enjoyed by privileged persons under the patents granted by Charles the Second; the bungling intervention of court officials invested with supreme power over the dramatic literature of the nation; and defective copyright laws, that rendered justice neither to the nation nor to the foreign writer for the theatre. And something, too, the stage of later years has been affected by a change in public taste, which has subordinated the play to the novel or the poem, and, to a great extent, converted playgoers into the supporters of circulating libraries.

CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

ESTHER and her mother went away from us next morning to stay with an aunt of the latter. It was quite a sudden arrangement, though Mrs. Hume had never before in my recollection left her quaint rooms in the palace for more than a quiet stroll on sunny mornings with her daughter, or a quiet tea-drinking on summer evenings with us. She could not be induced to listen to my entreaties that they would at least delay their departure till next day,

so that they might dine with us to meet Colonel Dalton.

Esther was looking very ill. She was always pale, as I have said; but to-day her face was white with the whiteness of moonlight upon snow; and there were dark rings drawn heavily round the sweet patience of her eyes. It made me unhappy even to look at her, unhappy and penitent too; for though she assured me again and again that her faint was nothing, that she was rather over-tired and feeling the heat, &c., I could not but remember that it was I who tired her, and that my idle chatter on the previous day might, perchance, have touched on that old wound in my darling's heart, and set it bleeding again.

Long ago—nearly ten years, I think, and ten years seem very long to a girl of nineteen—Esther had been engaged to a young man who was reading with her father; had been deserted by him, and had never got over it; for the simple reason that the honest contempt, that most good women must ere long learn to feel for such dishonest treachery, never came to her. When, at the end of his residence with Mr. Hume, this young man went up to Oxford to take his degree, he exacted from Esther a vow of unswerving trust in his love and faith; a trust which was to remain firm even if their engagement lasted for years, if his affection seemed to cool, or if they never saw one another till he came to claim her—a trust such as he would place in her, he said. And Esther not only gave the pledge, she kept it!

He took his degree, and was sent by his father to travel on the Continent before settling down into any profession; and there he remained nearly a year. Esther stayed at home, trusted in him, and was happy. His father died, and he came home, but did not write to her for some time, and then only brief notes to excuse himself for not being able to come and see her. He had “loads of business” to attend to; had chosen the army—always his favourite idea, but one negatived by his father—for his profession, and was trying for the purchase of a commission. He got his commission at last, and was gazetted to a regiment under orders for India; and Esther never knew it till he ran down to the village to bid her and her parents a hurried farewell. Mrs. Hume thought his manner much altered, and grown constrained and cold. Esther thought it the natural effect of his grief at parting, and loved him the better for it.

He told her that the suddenness of their orders prevented him from pressing her to accompany him; and asked her if she would mind coming out to him, if he found himself totally unable to come home for her. No, Esther said; she would mind nothing which could be good for him. His duty was to his regiment; hers to act as he and her parents thought best. And so he went away, all his old passionate affection reviving at the end, while she tried to bear up till he was gone; then grieved long and bitterly, but schooled herself to patience, trusted in him, and was happy still. Two years passed; his letters, frequent at first, soon grew rare and brief, and at last stopped altogether. They saw his promotion in the papers, but no word came from himself; Mr. Hume forbade his name to be mentioned; the neighbours spoke of her as "Poor Esther," and were virulent on the subject of her wrongs. Esther held up her head, went about her duties cheerfully, and still tried to be happy. He came home on leave; and they never knew it till one day by chance, when they heard that he was married and in Paris with his wife. The shock almost took away Esther's life; it never touched her faith. "He has been told that I am dead, or false," she said; "thank Heaven at least that the lie has not wrecked his happiness altogether, that he has found consolation. Some day we shall meet in Heaven, where all things are known; and he will see that I have kept my word," and so she trusted in him still.

She never spoke of him again, never heard his name mentioned. Her father was given the living of Maidenborough, and they left their remote village for the old town, to reside there in the rectory till his death, and afterwards at the palace.

That is Esther's story. How her life has passed in these latter years I have already hinted to you.

Esther had been away a week; and I was out walking with Colonel Dalton. He had asked mamma to let me go with him, to show him an ancient font in a village church, about three miles from our town; and, side by side, we threaded the dusty white lanes, with the tall, green hop-vines curling out in blossom and tendril from their supporting poles on either side, and faint, amber-coloured heat-mists hanging over the blue valley below—Colonel Dalton talking of some of his Franco-Prussian

adventures, and I listening greedily. By-and-by he said, laughing:

"Why, Miss Birdie, you are making me as garrulous as an old woman. I shall be voted unbearable at my club when I go back if you get me into such evil habits."

"Don't go back, then," I answered, laughing too; "stay here, where it is not an evil habit, but a good one. We won't vote you unbearable."

"I wish I could," looking earnestly at me; "but I'm afraid you'd tire very soon of a worn-out soldier's stories."

"Try!" I answered laconically. "We are not changeable people in Maidenborough. We do and say and think the same things—all of us—from year's end to year's end."

"Good Heavens!" in a tone of horror; "however do you endure it?"

"Could not you?" I asked, looking up wistfully; "why, it is one of the pleasantest things in the place. When things are nice, one doesn't want them to change."

"Ah, that's a woman's point of view. Unfortunately—I speak as a man—when things don't change they generally cease to be 'nice,' as you call it. Now, I should have thought you would have enjoyed travel and variety;" and then he started off into fresh descriptions of beauties I had never seen, and delights I had hardly imagined, talking of them as of things I must know one day, till it seemed so easy and natural that I fell into the same humour, and built castles in the air of travels in Spain and Italy, until we came home greater friends than ever.

We had become friends. Every few days I wrote to Esther, and every letter was filled, girl fashion, with Colonel Dalton's sayings and doings, and entreaties that she would come home and make his acquaintance, for he cannot stay much longer, and almost each morning talked of going—talked of it; but still he did not go. We quarrelled, of course—he had a way of alluding to women now and then in a slighting tone, of which I highly disapproved. Also he declined to enter into my friendship for Esther, and rather snubbed my enthusiasm on the subject.

"Are we not very comfortable without this paragon of yours, Birdie?" he said to me one day. We were on the river, returning from a row; and you may observe that he had dropped the 'Miss' now in speaking to me; but then, as he said, he was such an old friend of papa's. "I think I should find her a great bore and run away in disgust."

"You don't know what you are talking of," I answered indignantly. "You don't know Esther. Ah! if you did!—"

"I've known two or three Esthers in my life, and none of them were to be compared to a certain hot-tempered and charming young friend of mine. One was our major's wife in the 17th. Ah! I was desperately smitten with her; she made such capital milk-punch for us youngsters! And another—Well, *she* was desperately smitten with me. I was a lad then, you know, not an ugly old soldier; and, between ourselves, if I hadn't gone abroad I do believe I should have married her; for she was a prettyish little soul, though awfully 'good' and dowdy. Ah! boys are sad dogs, Birdie. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know anything about them," I answered, pained and stiffly; "but I don't think you can have been a nice one."

"Why not?"

"You talk as if you had been always falling in love or playing at doing so; and as if every woman— I don't think that sort of thing is manly."

"And you think me unmanly, then?" he asked with considerable heat.

"No, no!" I answered eagerly. "I know you are not. If you were, I wouldn't care how you talked of yourself; but I can't bear you to pretend to be worse than you are."

"Then, Birdie, you do care—a little—for what I am?" he said softly, as he leant over the oars to look up into my face.

No answer. I was busy with a knot in the tiller-rope.

"Wouldn't you rather I made myself out worse—far worse than I am—than you should find me out worse than I seem?"

"Of course." My head was still bent over that troublesome knot, but I felt he was drawing nearer.

"What if I were to tell you that, despite those youthful follies—which all men go through and get over as they grow older—I have never really known what deep, passionate love was till this fortnight! No; not even in the case of my poor wife. She was amiability itself, and I was sincerely attached to her; but now—now, Birdie—I know it was not love, not the love which—I am feeling now."

We were slowly drifting into the bank as he spoke. Tall thickets of wild roses, one snow of blossoms, growing almost with their roots in the river, were hanging over our heads—the water beneath was a deep, clear brown, strewn with white blossoms and scattered petals, and

with tall, heavy-headed bulrushes standing up in it. The sunlight slept on the yellow water-lilies, and the meadows dappled with sheep, and lazy brown kine on the farther side. I can see it all now, if I shut my eyes. Then I only saw and heard him: nothing more.

"Birdie," he said, in a lower, sweeter tone, and putting aside the oar to take my hand; "dear little Birdie, don't you know who has taught me what real love is?"

His other arm was closing round me. I could not move or answer. My face was burning, my heart in a whirl of confused happiness. Half involuntarily I yielded to the clasp which was drawing me nearer, when his finger caught in a locket I wore round my neck. There was a gleam of gold between me and the water, and I sprang forward to save it, nearly upsetting the boat by the suddenness of the movement. For a moment, indeed, we rocked to and fro with such perilous force that my arms, face, and dress were splashed with water and wet rose-petals. The next, he had restored our equilibrium, and was holding me close to him, his face very pale, and the rescued locket in his hand.

"Oh! I am so sorry," I stammered penitently; "but—but I thought it would go to the bottom; and it is Esther's, the only one she ever gave me. I couldn't bear to lose it."

But he did not answer me, did not seem aware that his arm was still round me. His eyes were fixed, not on me, but on the dear face in the locket, and the expression of his own had altered painfully—horribly.

"Esther Hume!" he said in a loud, hoarse voice. "Good Heavens! you don't mean to say she is your friend?"

I don't think I understood for a moment.

"Yes," I answered, vaguely wondering; "that is my Esther. I thought I had often told you her surname."

"You never did!" with passionate vehemence. "You said 'Esther,' nothing more. How, in Heaven's name, could I—"

It was dawning on me now, and I could feel my hands and my whole body growing cold—could feel how pale I had become in one short minute. He saw it too, and, dropping the locket, caught my hand again.

"What a fool I am! As if it mattered! Birdie, you haven't answered me yet. Won't you do so now, my darling? Won't you tell me—"

"Oh! don't, don't!" I cried, shrinking from him. "Tell me, Colonel Dalton, please—please tell me—it was not she

you were speaking of just now: the—the ‘good, dowdy’ girl who loved you !’

He looked up, trying to meet my eyes, trying to give me the answer I wanted. Alas ! it was no use. His rising colour, his look of conscious guilt, betrayed him; and I dropped back upon my seat, covering my face with my hands. Even to this day I seem to hear him urging me to look up, to listen to his love, assuring me that that was only a flirtation—a mere nothing—that he never really cared for her after the first; that he loves me, and me only, as he never has loved, never can love, any other!

I verily believe that he thought me jealous—jealous of Esther ! And with the thought—aye, with every word he uttered—something seemed to be thrusting me farther from him, crushing down my heart with an iron hand, and filling me with a sickening sense of pain and disgust. I could not speak at first; my silence encouraged him, and he tried to take my hand. I snatched it away, and asked him—how hoarse my voice had become ! I hardly knew it—to take me home.

“But, Birdie darling, listen to me. Is it that you doubt my love that you are so unkind ? Dearest, believe in it, I beg you. I swear to you that that other girl was no more than the folly of an hour to me; that I never meant to marry—”

“Oh ! do not ! please don’t go on,” I broke in, shivering and sobbing. “How can you talk of her so, while— Oh ! Esther, Esther, my darling ! and you loved him ! you believed in him always !”

“You don’t mean to say,” he said, drawing himself up and speaking haughtily, “that you refuse me on Miss Hume’s account—that you care for her more than for me !”

“I do not care for you at all.” His tone stung me, and I answered calmly. “Esther Hume is my dear friend; and I love her dearly, dearly.”

“But—good God !—this is madness. Who ever heard of comparing a girl’s love with— Birdie, do you know what you are doing ? I am your friend. I love you dearly; and I believe that you love me too.”

“I do not,” I answered very sadly. Alas ! I did love him five minutes ago ; I know it now, I did. My heart was breaking between the murdered love for him, and the living tender one for her; between the passionate adoration of a girl for the one hero of her life, and hopeless contempt for the coward who has struck that adoration to the ground. “I might have loved you ; for I

thought you were good and true—a man, like my father. How could I tell that it was you who had deceived and betrayed the friend we all love, and broken her heart ?”

“Betrayed !” he echoed scornfully. He was very angry, and was working vigorously at the oars again. “You use too high-flown words for me ; but this is all a girl’s romantic fancy. Ask Miss Hume herself. I appeal to her confidently, and in the meanwhile, Birdie, dear Birdie——”

But I would not listen. My cheek burnt at the meanness of that appeal to Esther’s generosity.

“Don’t ask me any more, Colonel Dalton. I daresay I use high-flown words. I am only a girl, I know ; but I hate lies. If Esther were not my friend at all, I could never feel anything but contempt for a man who had acted as basely and ungratefully as you did to her. I could never feel that his speaking of love to me was anything but an insult. Now that I know what you are, I am very sorry I ever met you, or talked to you as a friend.”

I felt my face glow, and my eyes flash as I spoke. An honest indignation had given the child a woman’s dignity for the moment. We were close under the towing-path now, and I added very quietly : “Please put me out of the boat here. I would rather go home by myself.”

He obeyed in silence. Somehow he did not quite seem to know what to say. As he put out his hand to help me on shore, his face flushed and he looked as if he were about to speak; but I sprang on to the bank without assistance, and only bowing to him gravely, turned resolutely away. In another minute I was among the trees of a little wood, and the boat and he, who an hour back was the sun of my little world, were lost to sight for ever. Ah ! Heavens, how long did I lie, face hidden, among the brown leaves and ferns of that little wood, weeping over my broken idol before I had courage to rise up and go home !

When I reached home at last, I found a letter from Esther, like all the rest, kind and bright, full of loving sympathy in my happiness and enthusiasm respecting Colonel Dalton’s perfections ; and while still excusing herself from coming home, telling me twice how happy her life is. Ah ! I might have wondered yesterday at her saying that when she is away from me. I understood—yes, my noble, generous Esther—I understood better now.

I was ill for some days after this. They said I had caught a bad cold on the river.

Perhaps I had; for my head ached incessantly, and my eyes were swollen and fevered with sleepless nights.

But Colonel Dalton was gone, and I was quite well when Esther came back; well and preternaturally lively in my greeting—not even noticing how pale and shadowy my pet had grown in London as I rattled on about all I had been doing in her absence, and all that had happened in the town. By-and-by she mentioned Colonel Dalton. How her hands trembled as she spoke!

"He has gone away, has he not? but surely not for good!" she asked, slowly.

"Oh dear yes," I said cheerfully, and going to the window for a sprig of jasmine. "What should he come back here for? Why he stayed an immense time, as it was. Mother and I got quite tired of washing the best china. Fanny is so careless, you know."

Esther looked at me wonderingly, a little anxiously too, I could see.

"But you must be sorry to lose him, Birdie? You had grown such friends and liked him so much."

"Up to a certain point, yes. After that I grew a little—well, you know, as papa said, he was rather old for me, and— Oh! don't shake your head at me. Don't you sometimes get tired of people? I do, and I think he got rather tired of us; and— Oh, Esther! there are such nice people at the Hollies, two girls and a son, and—"

And so I got over it. I could see Esther thought me capricious and childish; but I did not care. Better so than that she should know the truth.

Her lover is still sacred in her memory, still a victim to "circumstances;" and when I see the serene light come into her face, and the old sweet smile to her lips, I thank God who gave me strength to spare her that bitterest of all earthly agonies—the knowledge that our loved ones are unworthy of love and us.

THE GLACIAL PERIOD, OR ICE AGE.

To me it has often been a difficulty how "glacial periods" (for geologists in general go in for more than one) can have come on, just when the climate of our quarter of the world was at its warmest. They tell us that the Gulf Stream accounts for a great deal, and that when the Sahara was an inland sea, Western Europe, cooled instead of heated by southerly winds, must have been far colder than it is now. Then, again,

we are referred to problematical causes like "a change in the inclination of the earth's axis." Indeed, the "catastrophic" or sensational geologists—those who think that every great change has been the result of some sudden convulsion—have half-a-dozen startling ways of accounting for a plunge from heat to cold, and vice versa. But catastrophic geology is somewhat out of date; the newer, and probably the truer method, is that which accounts for results by the action of such causes as are now going on around us. It was "slow and sure" then, just as it is now. Earthquakes, and such-like phenomena, do still work sudden wonders before our eyes. A whole line of coast in South America is, in a moment, sometimes lifted, sometimes sunk, several feet above or below its former level. A new island rises in a single night within the radius of a submarine eruption. But these are little exceptions compared with the gradual rising of the whole Scandinavian peninsula, or that slow settling down which has left, in the multitudinous islands of the Pacific, the sole relics of a submerged continent. Change enough there has been in this world of ours, but it has generally been a gradual change. A "glacial period" in Europe does not necessarily mean that the whole of the continent had the climate of Greenland; it may be more reasonably accounted for by supposing a different distribution of land and water. Look at a geological map of Europe in what is termed the "pliocene" period, and you notice that there was a vast deal more sea then than there is now. Europe was little more than a few groups of islands. At the same time the primitive mountain ranges were higher than they are now, so that we come to much the same state of things as that which is going on now in New Zealand—land of no great extent, in a temperate (i.e., non-tropical) climate, rising here and there to great elevations. These are just the conditions for a "glacial period." In such an archipelago the summers would be wet and cloudy, and then in winter, though there would be no intense cold, there would be plenty of snow. New Zealand has its glaciers; and if New Zealand were cut up into half-a-dozen islands, its mountains retaining their present height, these glaciers would come down so close to the coast as to make a "glacial period" out there. As it is, the great wonder of the New Zealand glaciers is that they do come down so low—to within some thousand six hundred feet above the sea level; and that on their

edges you find not the scanty Alpine flora which surrounds the glaciers of Switzerland, but tree-ferns, dracænas, New Zealand flax, plants so tender that they cannot stand a winter in Lombardy or Provence. Now, this was the case in Europe during our glacial "period;" the glaciers came right down to the sea, and the narrow belt of habitable land was at least as warm as the corresponding countries now are. Take Italy, for instance, where the evidence of old glaciers is clearer than in France or England. It was all sea up to the foot of the Alps, the Apennines being a chain of mountainous islands. The Italian lakes Como, Maggiore, and the rest, were not lakes but fiords, like those on the coast of Norway, open to the sea and running far in among the mountains. The sea was as warm as our Mediterranean now is; yet the glaciers came down not only to the water's edge, but into the water itself, as they now do in Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla. How do we know this? Because the glacier always pushes in front of it a mass of stones and earth, called a "moraine," and the "moraines" of these old glaciers exist to this day, and form the hills about Bologna, Sienna, and Astesan in Piedmont, &c. These hills, geologically examined, are found to be made up of "erratic blocks" (boulders), scratched pebbles of Alpine rock, sand, and "glacier-mud," and mixed up with this are deposits of shells of which more than forty per cent. belong to species still living in the Mediterranean. You may see it for yourself at Camerlata, on the line from Como to Milan; and the fact proves that this was a submarine "moraine," for the shells are as fresh as if they had been alive yesterday; they must have been buried where they lay. The softer pebbles, too, are bored by that pholas which plays such curious tricks with soft stones and wood on our own coasts. This, then, was a "glacial period," without any lowering of the temperature at the sea level. With high mountains in a humid atmosphere, there will always be glaciers. Except in the tropics, they will, in such a climate, come down much nearer the coast than where the climate is drier. Siberia, with dry air and no high ranges near the coast, has no glaciers. In France, of which at that time the greater part was under water—the Jura and the neighbouring mountains; Auvergne, with its volcanic hills; the Vosges; and a few more ranges, standing out like island-groups—the glaciers also came down a long way. The glacier of the Rhone, for instance, can be traced by its "moraine," across the

range of the Jura and down at least as far as Lyons. "Erratic blocks," of a stone only quarried in the valley of Saas, in the canton of Valais, are found about Geneva, and indeed on the whole plain which skirts the Jura. They are not "rolled," as they would have been if the river had brought them down in its floods, or if they had belonged to some "drift-bed." Their angles are mostly as sharp as when the frost dislodged them from their bed; they have been pushed along, not rolled; and the very scratches which other rocks made on them are still as fresh as ever. The old notion used to be that these "boulders" were dropped by icebergs. It may have been so in some cases. The blocks of Finland granite, along the North German plains, may have sailed over in this way when the Scandinavian peninsula was what Greenland is now; the blocks on our flat east coast may have been floated down from Cumberland. But, for many reasons, which it would take us too long to go into, the "iceberg" theory has been, in the majority of cases, supplanted by that of glaciers.

The great point, when you find a boulder of wholly different rock from any that is found in its neighbourhood, is to settle whether or not it has been subject to the action of water. If so, it has nothing directly to do with glacial action, though it may have been brought on from where the glacier left it. But if the rock (or pebble) is angular, scratched, polished on one side, and if the rocks near it (supposing there are any) are polished and marked with parallel scratches; if, moreover, there are traces of what those accustomed to the Alps recognise at once as "glacier-mud," then you may be sure that the glacier once reached as far as the said boulder.

This "glacier-mud," or clay, mixed with scratched pebbles, is called "till" in Scotland. There is plenty of it there, and in our Lake district, and in Wales and parts of Ireland. Indeed, it was in Scotland, along the valley of Loch Ness, that the "parallel roads," scratched by the glacier as it moved along accompanied by its lateral "moraines," were first noticed. Legend had laid hold of them before science took them into consideration. Ask a Highlander in the neighbourhood about "Fingal's roads," and he will know what you mean.

The "glacial period," then, was one when almost every mountain range in Europe had its glaciers. The climate of the continent was not arctic, though it was undoubtedly on the whole colder than

at present; but there must have been conditions, such as damp and cloudiness—such as exist now in New Zealand—along with others that we know nothing of, to bring about such a state of things. At that time, too, no doubt the range of advance and retreat of the glaciers was far wider than it now is. Even now glaciers move to and fro. In 1818 those of the Alps had reached their farthest point downward. From that time to 1854 some of them were almost stationary, others slowly retreated. Since 1854 all have been retreating rapidly. The great glacier Des Bossons, at Chameouni, has gone back more than five hundred feet since 1818; that of the Rhone almost as much.

Was man alive in the old "glacial period?" It was not too cold for him: it is not too cold for the Esquimaux in Greenland. And that he certainly was alive is proved by the discovery of "flints" and carved bones, not only in the drift, but in "glacier-mud," but above all by a wonderful "find" at which Sir Charles Lyell was present, in 1834. An "cesar," one of those hills of glacier-clay and sand, covered with "erratic blocks," which are so common in Sweden, was being cut through to make a canal, when, twenty yards and more below the surface, they found the wooden framework of a cottage, with fireplace and half-burnt logs and chopped wood for future use; close by it were dug out the remains of a canoe, the timbers of which were fastened with wooden pins.

What did this prove? Just this: that ages ago a fisherman lived on what was then the water's edge; that the coast was slowly submerged—so slowly that what was built on it suffered no shock; then an inland glacier kept pushing out to sea the mud and sand of its "moraine;" a bank was formed on which shells (still found in the cesar) lived and died; and by-and-by, when icebergs, broken off from the inland glacier, had dropped plenty of "erratic blocks," the land was raised and the buried cottage along with it, and there it remained till the happy chance which laid it open to the eyes of the geologists. Other traces of man have been found elsewhere in glacier-clay, notably near Ulm, amid the "moraines" of the old glacier of the Rhine—bones, flint-knives, &c., lying in the glacier-mud, and covered with a layer of tufa (soft limestone), as well as with a bed of peat, and the ordinary vegetable mould on the top of all.

On the whole, it seems that during the "glacial period," the temperature of Europe

at any rate was considerably lower than it now is. The British Isles (what there was of them) and the Scandinavian peninsula, were much as Greenland is now—covered, except a narrow fringe around the coast, with an unbroken cap of ice, yet apparently not colder than Lapland. The island-groups which represented France and Western Germany had, of course, more habitable land and less glacier. And both the southern slope of the Alps and the Apennines were as New Zealand would be, if its glaciers, instead of stopping short amid tree-ferns and such delicate plants, and then sending seaward those ice-cold rivers which have drowned so many fine fellows, came at many points right down to the water's edge. Read the accounts of the exploration of the east coast of Greenland, up to the seventy-third degree of north latitude, by the Germania. In August, 1870, she sailed up one of the deep fiords, and found glaciers everywhere. The silence was broken only by the fall, every now and then, of an ice-avalanche, as the cap of ice, growing continually heavier from the fresh vapour condensed upon it, pushed forward and reached the edge of the cliff. Through chasms and little valleys, here and there, the glaciers came down to the water's edge, and from these broke off the "bergs," often loaded with "erratic blocks," the melting of which, as they move southward, often gives us a sudden spell of cold and wet in summer. There was at one time an ice-cap like this over most of the then existing parts of Great Britain and Ireland; and this cap did not need, as glaciers now seem to do, a backing of high mountains. Ireland, for instance, was one great glacier; so was the plain of North America. Our world, then, probably showed, as Mars does now to observers in other planets, two great caps of white about its poles. How is it that, if the world is constantly cooling, the ice has got less? Who can tell? That is one thing in which the modern school of geologists is superior to the earlier men. They are modest; they are not ashamed to say: "We don't know; we must wait, and study facts, and compare one discovery with another." The old geologists always had their "theory" ready to meet every case. It was "cosmic forces," or a change in the inclination "of the earth's axis," or some other astronomical assumption which accounted for "the great ice-age." This positive talk brought a good deal of discredit on geology. We are wiser now. We say there certainly was an Ice Age, or Glacial

Period, and during this man lived in a climate which at its worst was not so bad as Greenland, for he was not limited to the fellowship of polar bears, white hares, and blue foxes; he had the musk ox and the reindeer, and probably a woolly elephant. Moreover, in certain favoured spots, he was almost as well off for temperature as the New Zealanders of the southern island. Shall we ever have an Ice Age again? Shall we ever be able to tell how long ago it is since the last? Whether or not, we can always tell how far the old glaciers extended by studying "the testimony of the rocks" in the way that I have indicated above.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,
AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK IV. AUDREY'S NARRATIVE. CHAPTER II.
A STRANGER AT WROTTESLEY.

"In a small circle like that within which our life at the Dingle House revolved, events of an exciting nature are apt to leave a more sensible blank, to be succeeded by a more perceptible lull, than in larger ones, where excitement follows excitement. This truism impressed itself very forcibly upon me when I found myself suffering from the depression which had its double origin in Madeleine's absence, and the general flatness after Miss Lipscott's wedding.

"Of course the wedding gave us something to talk about for a while; and Captain and Mrs. Simcox enjoyed quite a run of popularity. The topic exhausted itself in time, however; and, though I was not of a discontented disposition, things were a little dull at the Dingle House. On the whole, however, I got on pretty well, and, when I did mope a little, my moping never took the form of wanting to get away from Wrottesley. Indeed, I liked the place better than ever, and would have stood out against any attempt to make little of its attractions. Madeleine had made over to me Cutchy and the pony-carriage for the term of her absence. Concerning the harmonious carrying out of her kind intentions in this matter I had my doubts. To tell the truth, I was afraid of Bruce. If he should discern any cause or impediment which he would consider just, I regarded my chances of seeing Cutchy's head shaking itself, and Cutchy's tail twitching itself, at the garden-gate three days in each week as highly uncertain. But fortune favoured me.

"The weather was bright and clear when Madeleine Kindersley left Beech Lawn, and the next day Bruce and the precious animal under his charge turned up punctually at the Dingle House. I got ready for a drive as quickly as I could, and ran to the gate, where I found Bruce standing beside the pony, with one hand laid very broadly and flatly upon its fat back, and a stolid expression in his countenance which I knew well. Had I not seen it often enough when Madeleine thought we 'might make a little round,' and Bruce thought Cutchy 'had had quite enough of it'? He saluted me gravely, and I tried to look unconcerned, as I stepped into the little carriage, and arranged my dress. When I stretched out my hand to take up the reins, Bruce spoke:

"'If you please, miss,' he said, 'and meanin' no unkindness, I should like to come to an understanding about this here pony, and these here drives; not saying for a moment against your havin' of them.' He removed his hand from Cutchy's back, then slapped it down again more broadly and flatly than before—an attention which Cutchy acknowledged by a playful bite; and I merely smiled assent—such a cowardly smile!

"'Cert'nly not, miss,' he continued; 'only I don't, and I never did, hold with ladies' drivin', and I never shall hold with it.'

"'Well, of course, Bruce, if you think—'

"He interrupted me, not rudely, but with decision, and gave Cutchy another friendly slap, which she acknowledged as before:

"'This here pore animal, miss, is used to Miss Kindersley's ways in a measure, but she ain't used to yours; and, not meanin' any offence, I don't think as you've got any, not in the way of drivin', leastways; and what I want to say is, as it would be more pleasanter and comfortabler for all parties—if you was to let me drive.'

"The sudden change from the dictatorial to the pathetic, as Bruce uttered the last words, was very ludicrous; but I would not have laughed on any account. I assented, not only willingly, but gratefully; and from that moment the good understanding between myself, Bruce, and Cutchy was undisturbed.

"My first letter to Madeleine contained an account of this little incident. She said, in reply, that she was delighted to hear the affair had come off so well, adding:

"'If you had hesitated, Cutchy would have had a convenient cough—I believe she coughs, and I know she goes lame,

when Bruce tells her to practice either of those artifices;—but you will be a prime favourite henceforth, and held up in future days as an example of all a young lady should be in respect of “pore animals.””

“ Madeleine had left me a good many things to attend to for her, and it was not until I was taking her directions that I knew how useful and beneficent her quiet and unpretending life was. I had frequently accompanied her on her ‘rounds,’ though I rarely entered any of the houses; but I had not the least idea of the organised system on which Madeleine Kindersley carried out the duties which some girls would never think of doing at all, and others would perform fitfully, or by deputy. I am glad to remember that the discovery inspired me with respect, and at least a temporary emulation. One of the distinguishing characteristics of my brother Griffith was his power of sympathy. I had felt it always, though I had but lately learned to define it. This was the something which made him companionable to everybody—to my father in his bookish ways and almost recluse fancies; to Lady Olive Despard, in her quiet activity; to me, who was so unlike himself; to Mr. Lester, who was a traveller, a scientific man, and knew the world. The only exception to this rule of companionableness on Griffith’s part, to this pleasant sympathy, was, as I have already said, in the case of Madeleine Kindersley; and this, especially as it had led to what I had called ‘lectures’ by Griffith, I particularly disliked. So soon as I discovered how systematic and unostentatious Madeleine’s beneficence was, I resolved to tell Griffith about it. That was exactly the sort of thing he would like and commend. So I took an early opportunity of expatiating to Griffith upon the gratitude and affection which I heard expressed towards Madeleine by many of the poorer dwellers in and about Wrottesley, and the quiet and unostentatious charity by which she amply merited it.

“ She is as good as she is clever and handsome,” I continued; ‘ and ’—here I made a great plunge—“ why you do not like Madeleine, and why Madeleine does not like you, I really cannot make out. In you I suppose it is the natural perversity of a brother; but Madeleine is only a friend, and you need not, therefore, dislike people just because I like them.”

“ I spoke with a good deal of impatience, because Griffith had said just nothing at all in reply to my eloquent exposition

of the particular trait in Madeleine’s disposition, which, I thought, could not fail to attract him.

“ He passed by the earlier portion of my petulant speech to take up and comment on the latter.

“ ‘ And so Miss Kindersley does not like me? I wonder she should take the trouble to ask herself, or to tell you, whether she likes me or not.’

“ ‘ As if she ever did such a thing, Griffith! Why, she is always so nice and kind to me about everything, that no matter how much she might feel it, it would never occur to her to say anything which could hurt me.’

“ ‘ What did you tell me she did not like me for, then? You are becoming a puzzle, Audrey; you who used to be so very straightforward and downright, not to say rude, when you chose. It is not of the slightest consequence, but I certainly did gather from you that I have not had the good fortune to win a place in Miss Kindersley’s good graces.’

“ ‘ Mercy on us!’ I exclaimed, now thoroughly roused, ‘ you used not to be so very grand and grave about it. You are not a bit like yourself when you are talking to her, and she is not a bit like herself when she is talking to you. I never saw you get on well together yet, except at Adelaide’s wedding; and then, I suppose, you could not help it, as all the other people were so jolly.’

“ Griffith looked more vexed than I liked to see him, as he answered my vehement speech:

“ ‘ You are quite wrong, Audrey; and I wish you would not trouble your head about my likes and dislikes. You are constantly bringing this fancy of yours up between us; suppose you let it drop for the future.’

“ He effectually put a stop to it for the present, for he walked off and left me.

“ As may be supposed, my dignity was gravely injured, and I took good care to talk no more about Madeleine to Griffith. I should have liked to punish him, too, if I could have managed it, by making a mystery of Madeleine’s letters; not that he would have cared to know what she was doing, or how much or little she was enjoying all the novel delights of London, but he was always interested in everything that concerned Lady Olive Despard, and Madeleine’s letters had a great deal about her in them.

“ I could not, however, secure to myself this trifling satisfaction. I had forgotten

to take account of my father. I felt a delightful sense of novelty and importance when I found a letter from Madeleine beside my plate on the breakfast-table; and was just about to play the little game with it, which I had artfully planned for the discomfiture of Griffith, when my father laid aside his newspaper, and said, briskly:

"Well, Audrey, I see you have a letter; let us hear the news of Lady Olive."

"I was exceedingly provoked, but there was nothing for it but to obey my father. Accordingly I had to repeat all the facts which were narrated in the letter, keeping to myself only the 'nonsense bits'—that about Bruce and the pony for instance. I did look covertly at Griffith, but I could not make anything out of his face.

"She seems to be enjoying herself," said my father, "and that's all as it should be," when I had read to him Madeleine's account of how she had seen some of the great public sights of London. "Really fashionable people never go near them, I believe," she wrote, "and don't even know there are such things; but Lady Olive and I are not fashionable, and we mean to see them all. I was immensely delighted with the Tower, and entertained with a morose but philosophical befeater who had us in charge. When we wanted to go and look at the Regalia, he had to relinquish us for awhile—the crown jewels have a female exhibitor—and he waited until we came out, disappointed, as I suppose everyone is, with the tawdriness of the general effect of the display. I suppose no jewels ever look grand or genuine by day-light. "Well! have you seen 'em?" asked our befeater. I said we had. "Ah! and you don't think much on 'em? No more don't I. I wouldn't give 'alf-a-crown for the lot—not to keep, mind you!" and with this surprising declaration he resumed his task as showman. Lord Barr was delighted. He is great fun, much nicer than he was down at Wrottesley. Lady Olive says it is because he has not Mr. Lester to talk to about learned subjects, and is obliged to "decline upon our lower level," if not of heart, at least of intelligence; and Lord Barr says Lady Olive is a goose! Can you imagine anybody venturing to call Lady Olive a goose? He is so good-natured, and ready to go anywhere with us, and to do anything for us that we ask him. Lady Olive did not expect that we should see nearly so much of him as we do; she thought he would have been constantly away at some place down the river, where

they're building his yacht; but he says he can leave it to itself pretty much in its present stage, and wants to "start us," as he calls it, in London. His notions of sight-seeing are very liberal, I assure you, and he is delighted that I have never seen anything. "If Olive will only hold out," he says, "we'll see everything, from St. Paul's to the penny-peeps." Everything is to include the wonderful yacht. I was rather afraid of him at Wrottesley—don't you remember we thought him very distant?—but I laugh at myself now at the mere notion of such a thing; and the funniest part of it is that he was afraid of us all the time. "Two young ladies, of severe demeanour, and always together, alarmed me," he told me, quite seriously yesterday; so that it turns out that he was only shy. And he knows a very great deal, though he is so quiet about it, and so good-humoured with us; not that there's so much difference between him and his sister, for she seems to be quite able to talk to him about anything he is interested in; and it seems that he and Mr. Lester have discovered numbers of curious plants and shells and things during their former travels, and that Lord Barr is actually writing a book about them. It must be very nice to read a book by someone whom one knows, and likes, mustn't it? Of course I don't mean only a story, but a real book, with knowledge in it. He will be a long time away, and sometimes Lady Olive looks very grave about it. I think he is the only person in the world she really loves."

"Here there was a long stroke all across the paper, and below it, a day later, Madeleine resumed:

"I have not had a moment to myself until now to finish this. Lady Olive's friends have begun to find out that she is in town, and we have several invitations already. I am going to hear a debate in the House of Commons. It was such a pleasant surprise. Don't you remember our talking one day about what we should like best to see and do in London, and you said you would like best to see a Drawing-room, and I said I would like best to hear a debate? Only fancy Lord Barr's being so good-natured as to remember our talk, and going to a friend of his, an M.P., and getting him to put down my name—of course Lady Olive's too—so that my wish might be gratified as soon as possible! It is for to-morrow night that our names are down, and there is going to be a grand debate. Lord Barr has been ex-

plaining what they are going to talk about, and he does not see any reason in the world why women should not understand and study politics, if they have a taste for them. I don't know about studying politics, but I have sometimes wished papa would tell me about things, instead of making up his mind that I could not understand them.'

"Upon my word," said my father, with an amused smile, as I read all this aloud, rather heedlessly, "young ladies seem to criticise their papas pretty freely in their correspondence. Don't be too hard on me in your return confidence, my dear. Is that all?"

"Nearly all, papa," I answered, glancing over the closing sentences of the letter; "the rest is about her poor people, and some things she wants to have looked after at Beech Lawn."

"I put the letter in my pocket, and gave Griffith his second cup of tea with an aggrieved feeling. Not one word of comment had he made upon Madeleine's news.

"This was one of Bruce's days, and he presented himself punctually. I had business in the town, and I went to see Mrs. Kellett. I found the old lady, as usual, in the back parlour, behind the shop. She was seated in her old-fashioned easy-chair, beside a pleasant fire, waiting, spectacles on nose and knitting in hand, for the arrival of her customers. They seldom included strangers, and every resident in Wrottesley knew Mrs. Kellett. The half-glazed doors, with their curtains drawn back, opened into the neat little shop, with its closely-packed shelves and its brightly-polished mahogany counter. Nothing could be more cosy and confidential, and less suggestive of the customary vulgarity of trading in a small way, than the little 'interior.'

"Mrs. Kellett's back parlour was a sort of reliquary. The old lady had the tenacious and tender memory of 'better days,' and a certain means of pleasing her was to take notice of the little pictures, the little bits of old china, the quaint scraps of ornament and needlework, the small collection of books (mostly keepsakes and 'selections' of poetry), and the pistols, sword, and sabretache, arranged trophy-wise above the little mirror over the chimney-piece, which were the choicest relics in her collection—the outward and visible signs of that noble profession of arms which the late Captain Kellett had adorned. He had, indeed, died as a lieutenant, but nobody grudged him the brevet

rank, which the harmless, affectionate pride of his widow bestowed upon him. A dreadful little picture of him hung beside the chimney-piece—a picture with pink cheeks and black dabs for eyes; with shiny black hair and a pointed chin—but which represented, in a feeble way, a man so young that it was always difficult to me to realise that it could be the picture of Miss Minnie's father, of the husband of the old lady who primly knitted her life away within a yard of it. The picture had a spiky frame with odd projections—on which Mrs. Kellett would hang her keys, or her spectacle-case, or a little old-fashioned steel purse with a chain to it, which I used to regard as the degenerate survivor of the old style of châtelaine, and have since considered to be the forerunner of the new—and it was familiarly alluded to as 'Allan,' which had been Captain Kellett's christian-name. When any or all of the above-mentioned articles, or, indeed, any light household properties capable of suspension, happened to be missing, it was suggested that they were 'hanging up on Allan'; so that the poor captain's name was as much a household word as if he had been there to answer to it; and, somehow, the oddity never sounded either ludicrous or disrespectful. It was from Madeleine Kindersley's fine instinct of sympathy that I learned to recognise that there was something pathetic in the old lady's respectful tenderness for her shabby household gods—her meekly-uttered thankfulness that 'in all her trials she had been able to keep her few things about her.' After I had seen Madeleine making one of her kindly visits to Mrs. Kellett's back parlour, I felt secretly ashamed at the remembrance that I had often laughed at Miss Minnie's 'ma.'

"Miss Minnie had not returned from her round of morning music lessons. Mrs. Kellett was alone, and the little shop was empty. I had two subjects on which I could interest the old lady: they were Madeleine and Lord Barr. So I told her, generally, about Madeleine's letter, and observed, while I was talking, a more than ordinarily complacent look in her wrinkled, happy old face. She explained it soon: she had been unusually fortunate to-day. Not only had Lady Armytage come to the shop, early that morning—'She never buys so much as a reel of cotton elsewhere, and hasn't these fifteen years,' said Mrs. Kellett in a grateful parenthesis—and sat half an hour with her, and told her all the news about Master George

at college, and Master Bartholomew at sea ; not only had I now come, and given her the news she was delighted to hear about Miss Kindersley ; but Dr. Lester, the most satisfactory inmate they had ever had, had given her a message from Lord Barr himself. Yes, indeed, the kindest message, and his portrait.

"One of those new-fangled things, my dear"—photographs were many years old at the time, but it was to them that Mrs. Kellett applied the epithet—"that they tell me the sun takes in a minute; but really as much like his lordship as if a painter had taken a year or two over it. "You'll give this to Mrs. Kellett with my love," says his lordship in his letter to Dr. Lester, "and tell her I often wish I was making her toast in the back parlour, and am likely to wish the same oftener still when I find myself among the icebergs." He promised to send it to me, and it shall be framed and hung up like Allan; but I could hardly have expected he would have remembered me. I'll show it to you, my dear, it's in the second drawer.'

"The shop-door swung open at a somewhat vigorous push, and Mrs. Kellett's voluble speech was suspended. A customer entered the outer regions, and the old lady stepped briskly through the half-glazed doors, partially closing them behind her. I could see through the aperture the person who had come into the shop. She was a tall woman, of the style which men call 'fine'—that is, she was very upright, carried her head well, took up a good deal of room, and looked as if she could take excellent care of herself under any circumstances. She was very handsome; but her face did not please me; her colour was too bright, her eyes were too bold, her features were too strong; and I could see in a moment that, though she was well dressed, she was not a lady.

"She had not come to buy ! Poor Mrs. Kellett made a disappointed little bow at the intimation, given in a loud uneducated voice, and asked in what she could serve the lady.

"I want to find a place called Beech Lawn," she replied. "I have asked several people, and everybody tells me something different from everybody else. Which side of the town is it on ? and how far beyond the town is it ?"

"Beech Lawn, ma'am, Mr. Kindersley's place ? It is on the north road, and a good

four miles out of the town. Beech Lawn is quite a county place, ma'am."

"Four miles," said the lady—who must be a complete stranger in Wrottesley, as she did not know the way to Beech Lawn—"I can't walk so far—I must get a carriage."

"I should say so, ma'am," said Mrs. Kellett, civilly, but preparing to withdraw into her back parlour.

"Stay a moment," said the stranger. "Can you tell me whether Mr. Kindersley is at home ?"

"I cannot, indeed," replied Mrs. Kellett ; "but"—seeing Bruce draw up at the door at that moment, having finished his business at the saddler's, and come to fetch me, she added,—"here is Mr. Kindersley's groom ; he can tell you."

"At this I emerged from the back parlour into the shop.

"The pony-carriage has come for me, Mrs. Kellett," I said. "I can tell this lady anything she wants to know."

"Are you Miss Kindersley ?" she inquired, fixing her eyes upon me with a defiant stare.

"No," I replied, "I am not ; I am a friend of Miss Kindersley's. Mr. Kindersley is not at Beech Lawn ; he is in London. Miss Kindersley is also in London."

"Indeed!" said she, suspiciously. Then, after a slight pause: "Is there no member of the family at Beech Lawn ?"

"No ; they are all in London."

"I suppose I can get their address at the bank ?"

"I suppose so." I wondered it did not occur to her to ask me for it ; but I was very glad it did not, for she inspired me with an instinctive repugnance.

"The bank is in the High-street ?"

"It is."

"Good morning."

"She included Mrs. Kellett and myself in her brief valediction, swung herself out of the shop-door, which fell to with a bang behind her, and was gone.

"What a rude person," said Mrs. Kellett, her gentle dignity much ruffled. "I'm so glad Minnie was not here, my dear, to hear me spoken to like that, and the—the lady not coming here as a purchaser either. You need not mind her ; you've no call to care about anyone's manners ; but it is hurtful to those who have seen better days."